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OPELIKA-AUBURN NEWS

Opelika girls advance to regional finals — Sports, 1B

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Community College Leader Search

Wanted: President for Southern Union

BY KARA COLEMAN
kcoleman@oanow.com

The job posting for a president at Southern Union State Community College went live Thursday morning on the Alabama Community College System's website.

"As promised, the placement of a permanent president for Southern Union State Community College has been made a priority and is moving forward," ACCS Chancellor Jimmy Baker said. "Impressive work has been done by the Strategic Planning Committee with input from the entire Bison community, and a permanent president will be named no later than June of this year."

Southern Union, which has campuses in Opelika, Wadley and Valley, can expect to see another face at the helm before a permanent leader is named, however.

Blow

Ellard

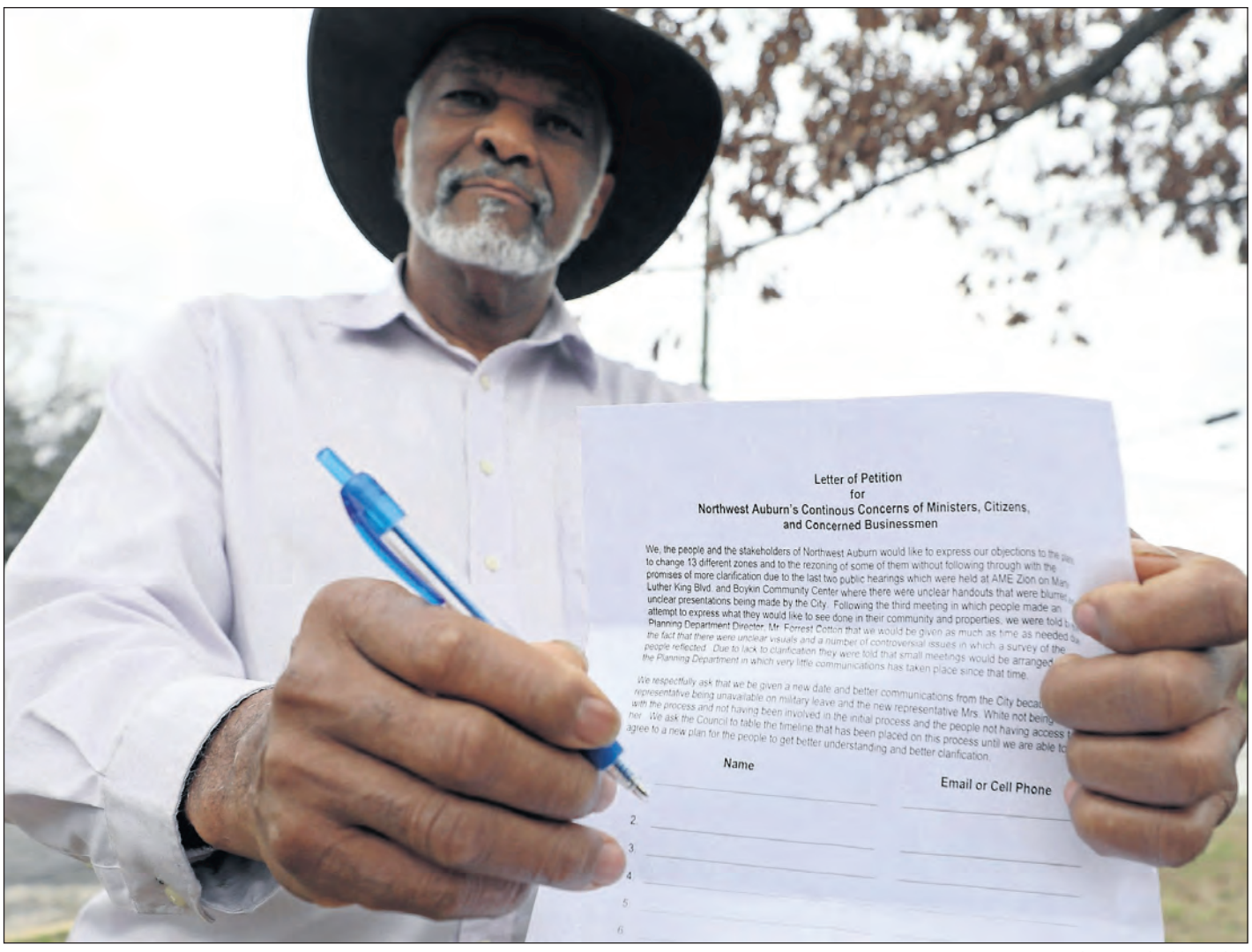
Bill Blow, who has been serving as the school's interim president since November, must end his term Feb. 28, due to the state's restrictions on employment by people who have already retired.

Blow will be replaced by Mark D. Ellard, who is scheduled to step into the interim president role officially March 1.

Like Blow, Ellard has a history of filling interim president roles in the community college system. He previously served as interim president at Chattahoochee Valley Community College from August 2015 until last month, when Baker named

See **WANTED**, Page 8A

NORTHWEST AUBURN NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



EMILY ENFINGER/EENFINGER@OANOW.COM

Auburn resident Lindbergh Jackson holds up a petition regarding proposed zoning changes in the northwest area of Auburn.

Residents to city: Slow rezoning

BY CARLA NELSON
cnelson@oanow.com

Auburn resident Lindbergh Jackson is so concerned with the upcoming rezoning of northwest Auburn, originally proposed in the city's CompPlan 2030, that he has started a petition signed by almost 100 residents in the northwest area.

The petition asks for the city of Auburn to stop moving forward with rezoning until the residents of northwest Auburn completely understand the changes.

"We feel like the people of Northwest Auburn are being disenfranchised and being treated unfairly because they don't have the knowledge of zoning and the rules and regulations as they are," Jackson said. "We want clarification. We want better communication."

The Northwest Auburn Neighborhood Plan focuses on about 1.4 square miles in northwest Auburn, which includes 737 developable acres bordered by Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Bragg Avenue, Shug Jordan Parkway and North Donahue Drive.

See **RESIDENTS**, Page 7A

Judge says ex-AU track coach's claims are 'plausible'

BY KARA COLEMAN
kcoleman@oanow.com

A federal magistrate judge ruled to partially grant and partially deny Auburn's request to dismiss a lawsuit by a former employee this week.

Adrian Ghioroaie-Panait, a former assistant track coach at Auburn University, filed a lawsuit against Auburn; head track coach Ralph Spry; and another member of the coaching staff, Henry Rolle, in October. In his suit, Ghioroaie-Panait claims he was terminated from employment at the university, despite a successful record as a coach, due to discrimination based on race, color and national origin.

Ghioroaie-Panait

Ghioroaie-Panait, who is of Romanian descent and nationality, alleged he had altercations with Rolle, a black man who is originally from the Bahamas. Ghioroaie-Panait implies Spry, who also is black, showed favoritism to Rolle, saying the head coach described Rolle as being "like his own son and right-hand man."

Ghioroaie-Panait, now employed by the University of Toledo, was fired from Auburn in May 2016, two months after he filed a complaint to the Human Resources Department.

"Spry told Ghioroaie that his nonrenewal was without cause," the report from Magistrate Judge Gray M. Borden stated. "Spry also asked Ghioroaie whether he remembered complaining to the university about Rolle

See **COACH**, Page 7A

Sheriff's report: Suspect confessed to Florida school attack

The Associated Press

PARKLAND, Fla. — The teenager accused of using a semi-automatic rifle to kill 17 people at a Florida high school confessed to carrying out one of the nation's deadliest school shootings and concealing extra ammunition in his backpack, according to a sheriff's department report released Thursday.

Nikolas Cruz told investigators that he shot students in the hallways and on the grounds of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, north of Miami, the Broward County Sheriff's Office report said.

Cruz told officers he brought more loaded magazines to the school and kept them hidden in the backpack until he got on campus.

The gunman fired into five classrooms — four on the first floor of the school and one on the second floor, Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel said.

When he was done shooting, the assailant dropped his AR-15 rifle and the backpack containing the ammunition and ran out of the building, attempting to

See **SUSPECT**, Page 6A

Shooting suspect Nikolas Cruz (left) makes an appearance Thursday with public defender Melisa McNeille before Judge Kim Theresa Mollica in Broward County Court in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

SUSAN STOCKER/SOUTH FLORIDA SUN-SENTINEL VIA AP POOL

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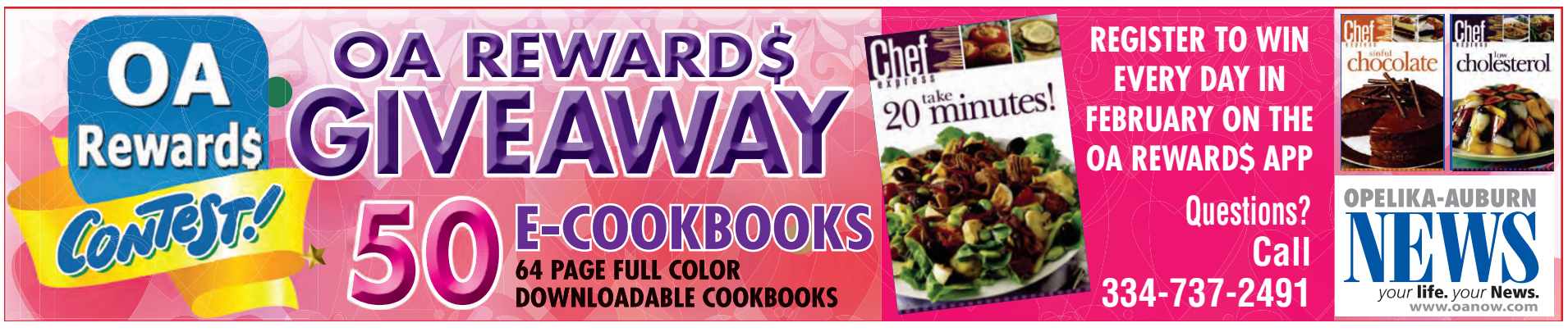
Mostly cloudy and warm